A

Wedding-Ring,

Fit for the

FINGER

OR, THE

Salve of Infinity

ON THE

Sore of Humanity.

Laid open in

A SERMON

AT

A Wedding in St. *Edmonds*.

By *WILLIAM SECKER*,
Late Preacher of the Gospel.

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Wedding-Ring.

FINGER.

OR, THE

ON THE

ASSERTION.

CHRISTIAN READER.

IT is not good weighing ones worth in such unequal Ballances, where the feather of Opinion turns the Scales. One Spoke can never stand still whilst the whole Wheel turns round. The Gifts and Graces of Christians lay in common, till Envy made the first incloſure. Here thou mayeſt ſhew thy Wiſdom in ſpinning a fine thread out of coarſe Wooll. Do not hurt him by thy Malice, who would help thee in thy Marriage. Who would plant a Piece of Ordnance to beat down an Aſpen leaf, which having always the Palſie, will fall alone? This

To the Reader.

Piece neither desires Supplanters, nor deserves Supporters. It comes forth as a pressed Souldier, not as a Volunteer; what it was in Preaching, it is in Publishing; there is not one Cubit added to its stature; to secure it from the Avenger of Blood, it flies to thy City of Refuge. *Let him who sows his Pains reap thy Prayers.*

Thine

in the

LORD JESUS.

Will. Secker.

GEN. II. 18.

And the Lord God said, it is not good that the Man should be alone: I will make him a help meet for him.

HUmane misery is to Divine Mercy, as a black foil to a sparkling Diamond, or as sable Cloud to the Sun-beams, Psal. 8. 4. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!* Man is,

In his Creation, Angelical.
In his Corruption, Diabolical.
In his Renovation, Theological.
In his Translation, Majestical.

An Angel in *Eden*.
A Devil in the World.
A Saint in the Church.
A King in Heaven.

There were four Silver Channels in which the Crystal Streams of Gods Affection ran to Man in his Creation.

1. In his Preparation.
2. In his Assimilation.
3. In his Coronation.
4. In his Association.

1. In his *Preparation*: Other Creatures received the Charter of their Beings by a simple *fiat*; but there was a Consultation at his Forming, not for the Difficulty, but for the Dignity of the Work. The Painter is more studious about that which he means to make his Master-piece. The Four Elements were taken out of their Elements, to make up the Perfection of Mans Complection; the Fire was purified, the Air

Air was clarified, the Water was purged, the Earth was refined; when Man was moulded, Heaven and Earth was married; a Body from the one was eſpouſed to a Soul from the other.

2. In his *Aſſimilation* other Creatures were made like themſelves, but Man was made like God, as the Wax hath the Impreſſion of the Seal upon it. It is admirable to behold ſo fair a Picture in ſuch coarſe Canvas, and ſo bright a Character in ſo Brown Paper.

3. In his *Coronation*: He that made Man and all the reſt, made Man over all the reſt; *quantillum Dominum poſſuit Deus in tantum dominium*, he was a little Lord of a great Lordſhip; this King was crowned in his Cradle.

4. In his *Aſſociation*: Society is the Solace of Humanity: the World would be a Deſart without a Conſort.

Moſt

Most of Mens parts are made in pairs; now he that was double in his perfection, must not be single in his condition, *and the Lord said*, &c.

These words are like the Iron gate that opened to *Peter* of its own accord; dividing themselves into three parts.

1. An Introduction, *And the Lord God said.*

2. An Assertion, *'Tis not good that Man should be alone.*

3. A Determination, *I will make an help meet for him.*

In the first there's a Majesty proposed.

In the second, there's a malady presented.

In the third, there's a remedy provided.

Once more let me put these Grapes into the Press.

1. The Soveraignness of the expression, *And the Lord God said.*

2. The

2. The Solitarineſs of the Condition, *Tis not good*, &c.

3. The Sutableneſs of the Proviſion, *I will make*, &c.

In the firſt, There's the worth of *Veracity*.

In the ſecond, There's the want of *Society*.

In the third, There's the work of *Divinity*.

Of theſe in their Order.

And firſt of the firſt.

Firſt, The Soveraigneſs of the Expreſſion, *And the Lord God ſaid*.

Luke 1. 70. As he ſpake by the mouth of his Prophets. In other Scriptures he uſed their mouths, but in this he makes uſe of his own: they were the Organs, and he the Breath; the early ſtreams, and he the Fountain. How he ſpake, 'tis

hard to be ſpoken whether eternally, or internally, or externally, *Quomodo non eſt quod quæremus, ſed potius quid dixerit intelligamus*; we are not to enquire to the manner of ſpeaking, but to the matter that's ſpoken; which leads me like a directing-ſtar from the Suburbs to the City, from the Porch to the Palace, from the Founder of the Mine, to the Treaſure that is in it, *It is not good*, &c.

In which you have two things,

1. The Subject.
2. The Predicate.

The Subject, *Man alone.*
The Predicate, *'Tis not good*, &c.

Firſt, The Subject, *Man alone*; take this in two branches.

1. As it is limited to one Man.
2. As it is lengthened to all Men.

Firſt,

First, as it is limited to one Man, and ſo it is taken particularly: Man, for the firſt Man. When all other Creatures had their Mates, *Adam* wanted his: though he was the Emperour of the Earth, and the Admiral of the Seas, yet in Paradiſe without a Companion; though he was truly happy, yet he was not fully happy; Though he had enough for his board, yet he had not enough for his bed: Though he had many Creatures to ſerve him, yet he wanted a Creature to ſolace him; when he was compounded in Creation, he muſt be compleated by Conjunction; when he had no ſin to hurt him, then he muſt have a Wife to help him; *It is not good that man ſhould be alone.*

Secondly, as it's lengthned to all Men, and ſo its taken univerſally, Heb. 13. 4. *Marriage is honourable*

unto all, not only ☩ but ☩. It's not only warrantable, but honourable. The whole Trinity hath conſpired together to ſet a Crown of Glory upon the Head of Matrimony.

1. *God the Father:* Marriage was a Tree planted within the Walls of Paradiſe, this Flower firſt grew in Gods Garden.

2. *The Son:* Marriage is a Cryſtal glaſs, wherein Chriſt and the Saints do ſee each others faces.

3. *The Holy Ghoſt*, by his overſhadowing of the Bleſſed Virgin. Well might the World when it ſaw her pregnancy, ſuſpect her Virginity: but her Matrimonial Condition was a grave to that Suſpicion: without this her Innocency had not prevented her Infamy: ſhe needed a Shield to defend that Chaſtity abroad, which was kept inviolable at home.

Too

Too many that have not worth enough to preſerve their virginity, have yet will enough to cover their unchaſtity; turning the Medicine of Frailty, into the Mantle of Filthineſs. Certainly ſhe is mad that cuts off her Leg to get her a Crutch, or that venomes her Face to wear a Mask.

St. *Paul* makes it one of the Characters of thoſe that ſhould caſhier the Faith, 1 *Tim.* 4. 3. Not to forbear Marriage, which may be lawful; but to forbid it, which is ſinful.

One of the Popes of *Rome*, ſprinkles this unholy drop upon it, *Carnis pollutionem & immunditiem.*

It's ſtrange that ſhould be a Pollution, which was inſtituted before Corruption; or that Impurity, which was ordained in the State of Innocency: or that they ſhould make that to be a Sin, which they make to be a Sacrament.

But

But a Baſtard may be laid at the Door of Chaſtity, and a Leaden Crown ſet upon a Golden Head.

Bellarmine that mighty *Atlas* of the Papal Power, blows his ſtinking breath upon it, ſaying, Better were it for a Prieſt to defile himſelf with many Harlots, than to be married to one Wife. Theſe Children of the Purple Whore prefer their Monaſteries before our Marriages, a Concubine before a Companion. They uſe too many for their Luſts, to chuſe any for their Love. Their Tables are ſo largely ſpread, that they can't feed upon one Diſh.

As for their exalting of a Virgin State, it's like him that commended Faſting when he had filled his Belly.

Who knows not that Virginity is a Pearl of Sparkling Luſtre? But cannot the one be ſet up, without the other be thrown down? Will no Oblation pacifie the former, but the

the demoliſhing of the later. Though we find many Enemies to the Choice of Marriage, yet it's rare to find any Enemies to the uſe of Marriage. They would pick the Lock that want the Key, and pluck the Fruit that do not plant the Tree.

The *Hebrews* have a Saying, *He is not a Man, that hath not a Woman.*

Though they climbe too high a bough, yet it's to be feared that ſuch fleſh is full of Imperfection, that is not tending to Propagation: Though Man alone may be good, yet *it is not good that Man ſhould be alone*; which leads me from the Subject to the Predicate, *It is not good*, &c.

Non bonum, is not in this place as *malum*, but *bonum eſt honeſtum, utile, jucundum.*

Now it is not good that Man ſhould be in a ſingle condition, upon a threefold conſideration.

1. In

1. In reſpect of ſin, which would not elſe be prevented. Marriage is like water, to quench the ſparks of luſts fire, 1 *Corinth.* 7. 2. *Nevertheleſs to avoid Fornication, let every one have his own Wife*, &c. Man needed no ſuch Phyſick when he was in perfect health. Temptations may break Natures beſt Fence, and lay its Paradiſe waſte; but a ſingle Life is a Priſon of unruly Deſires, which is daily attempted to be broken open.

Some indeed force themſelves to a ſingle Life, meerly to avoid the Charges of a Married State; they had rather fry in the greaſe of their own ſenſuality, than extinguiſh thoſe flames with an allowed remedy; *It's better to marry than to burn*, to be lawfully coupled, than to be luſtfully ſcorched. It's beſt feeding theſe flames with Ordinate fewel.

2. 'Tis

2. Tis not good in respect of Mankind, which then would not be propagated. The Roman Historian relating the ravishing of the *Sabine* Women, excused it thus, *Res erat unius ætatis populus virorum:* without them Mankind would fall from the Earth and perish. Marriages do turn Mutability into the Image of Eternity: it springs up new buds, when the old are withered. It's a greater honour for a Man to be the Father of one Son, than to be the Master of many Servants. Without a Wife, Children cannot be had lawfully; without a good Wife, Children cannot be had comfortably. Man and Woman, as the Stock and the Scion, being grafted by Marriage, are Trees bearing Fruit to the World.

St. *Augustine* says, This Pair is, *Primum Par & Fundamentum Omnium*, &c.

They are the first Link of Human Society, to which all the reſt are joyned. Mankind had long ago decayed and been like a Taper fallen into the Socket, if thoſe breaches which are made by Mortality, were not repaired by Matrimony.

3. Tis not good in regard of the Church, which could not then have been expatiated. Where there is no Generation, there can be no Regeneration.

Nature makes us Creatures, before Grace makes us Chriſtians.

If the Loins of Men had been leſs fruitful, the death of Chriſt would have been leſs ſucceſsful.

It was a witty Queſtion that one put to him that ſaid, Marriages fills the Earth, but Virginity fills the Heavens: How can the Heavens be full if the Earth be empty?

Had *Adam* lived in Innocency without Matrimony, there would have been no Servants of God in the

the Church Militant, nor no Saints with God in the Church Triumphant. But I will not ſink this Veſſel by the over-burthening of it, nor preſs this truth to death, by laying too great a load upon its ſhoulders.

There is one Knot which I muſt untie before I make a farther progreſs, 1 *Cor.* 7. 1. *It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman.*

Do all the Scriptures proceed out of the ſame Mouth, and do they not all ſpeak the ſame Truth? The God of Unity will not indite Diſcord; and the God of Verity cannot aſſert Falſhood. If Good and Evil be Contraries, how contrary then are theſe Scriptures? Either *Moſes* miſtakes God, or *Paul* miſtakes *Moſes* about the Point of Marriage.

To which I ſhall give a double Anſwer.

1. There is a Publick and a Private Good. In reſpect of one Man, it may be good not to touch a Wo-

man, but in respect of all, *So it is not good that Man should be alone.*

Moses speaks of the state of Man created, *Paul* of the state of Man corrupted: now that which by institution was a mercy, may by corruption become a misery; as pure water is tainted by running through a miry channel; or as the Sun-beams receive a tincture by shining through a coloured glass. There's no print of evil in the World, but sin was the stamp that made it. They that seek nothing but Weal in its Commission, will find nothing but Wo in the Conclusion. Which leads me from the Solitariness of the Condition, *Man alone*, to the Sutableness of the Provision, *I will make an help meet for him.*

In which you have two parts,

1. The Agent, *I will make.*
2. The Object, *A help.*

First,

First, The Agent, *I will make.*

We cannot build a House without Tools, but the Trinity is at liberty;

Dic Verbum tantum.

To God's Omniscience there's nothing invisible, and to God's Omnipotence there's nothing impossible.

We work by Hands without, but he works without hands. He that made Man meet for Help, makes a meet Help for Man.

Marriages are consented above, but consummated below, *Prov.* 18. 22. Though Man wants Supply, yet Man cannot supply his Wants, *James* 1. 17. *Every good and perfect gift comes from above*, &c. A Wife, though she be not a perfect gift, yet she is a good gift. These beams are darted from the Sun of Righteousness.

Haſt thou a ſoft Heart? It's of God's breaking: Haſt thou a ſweet Wife? She's of God's making.

Let me draw up this Expreſſion with a double Application.

1. When thou layeſt out for ſuch a good on earth, look up to the God of Heaven. Let him make thy choice for thee, who hath made his choice of thee. Look above you, before you, look about you. Nothing makes up the happineſs of a married condition, like the holineſs of a mortified diſpoſition. Account not thoſe the moſt worthy that are the moſt Wealthy. Art thou matched to the Lord? Match in the Lord. How happy are ſuch Marriages, where Chriſt is at the Wedding! Let none but thoſe who have found favour in Gods Eyes, find favour in yours.

2. Give God the tribute of your gratulation for your good Companions. Take heed of paying your Rent

Rent to a wrong Land-lord: When you taſte of the ſtream, reflect on the Spring that feeds it. Now thou haſt four Eyes for thy Speculation, four Hands for thy Operation, four Feet for thy Ambulation, and four Shoulders for thy Suſtentation. What the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is in Point of Divinity, that is unthankfulneſs in point of Morality; an Offence unpardonable. Pity it is but that Moon ſhould be ever in an Eclipſe, that will not acknowledge her beams to be borrowed from the Sun. He that praiſes not the Giver, prizes not the Giſt; and ſo I paſs from the Agent to the Object, *A Help*.

She muſt be ſo much, and no leſs; and ſo much and no more. Our Ribs were not ordained to be our Rulers. They are not made of the Head, to claim Superiority, but out of the Side, to be content with Equality. They deſert the Author of Nature, that invert the Order of Nature. The

Woman

Woman was made for the Mans comfort, but the Man was not made for the Womans command. Thoſe Shoulders aſpire too high, that content not themſelves with a room below their Head. It's between a Man and his Wife in the Houſe, as it is between the Sun and the Moon in the Heavens, when the greater Light goes down, the leſſer Light gets up; when the one ends in ſetting, the other begins in ſhining. The Wife may be a Sovereign in her Husbands abſence, but ſhe muſt be ſubject in her Husbands preſence. As *Pharaoh* ſaid to *Joſeph*, ſo ſhould the Husband ſay to his Wife, *Gen.* 41. 40. Thou ſhalt be over my Houſe, and according to thy word ſhall all my people be ruled; onely in the Throne will I be greater than thou. The body of that Houſhold can never make any good motion, whoſe bones are out of place. The Woman muſt be a help to the Man in theſe four things:

1. To

1. To his *Piety*.

2. To his *Society*.

3. To his *Progeny*.

4. To his *Prosperity*.

To his *Piety*, by the ferventneſs of her Excitation. To his *Society*, by the fragrantneſs of her Converſation. To his *Progeny*, by the fruitfulneſs of her Education. To his *Proſperity*, by the faithfulneſs of her Preſervation.

1. To his *Piety* by the ferventneſs of her Excitation, 1 *Pet.* 2, 7.

Husband and Wife ſhould be as the two Milch-kine, which were coupled together to carry the Ark of God: or as the two Cherubims, that looked one upon another, and both upon the Mercy-ſeat: or as the two Tables of Stone, on each of which were engraven the Laws of God. In ſome Families Married per-

ſons are like *Jeremiah's* two baskets of Figs, the one very good, the other very evil; or like Fire and Water, whil'ſt the one is flaming in devotion, the other is freezing in corruption. There is a two-fold hindrance of Holineſs; Firſt, of the right ſide; Secondly, on the left: On the right ſide, when the Wife would run in Gods way, the Husband will not let her go: when the Fore-horſe in a Team will not draw, he wrongs all the reſt; when the General of an Army forbids a March, all the Souldiers ſtand ſtill. Sometimes on the left; How did *Solomons* Idolatrous Wife, draw away his heart from Heaven? A ſinning Wife was Satan's firſt Ladder, by which he ſcaled the Walls of Paradiſe, and took away the Fort-Royal of *Adam's* Heart from him. Thus ſhe that ſhould have been the help of his Fleſh, was the hurt of his Faith: His Natures Under-propper, becomes his

his Graces Underminer; and she that should be a Crown on the Head, is a Cross on the Shoulders. The Wife is often to the Husband, as the Ivy is to the Oak, which draws away his sap from him.

2. A Help to his *Society* by the fragrantness of her Conversation.

Man is an Affectionate Creature; now the Womans Behaviour should be such towards the Man, as to requite his Affection by increasing his Delectation. That the Newborn Love may not be blasted as soon as its blossomed; that it may not be ruined before it be rooted. A Spouse should carry her self so to her Husband as not to disturb his Love by her Contention, nor to destroy his Love by her Alienation. Husband and Wife should be like two Candles burning together, which makes the House more lightsome; or like two fragrant Flowers bound up in one Nosegay, that augments

its ſweetneſs; or like two well-tuned Inſtruments, which ſounding together, make the more melodious Muſick. Husband and Wife, what are they but as two ſprings meeting, and ſo joyning their ſtreams that they make but one Current? It's an unpleaſing Spectacle to view any Contention in this Conjunction.

3. To his *Progeny*, by the Fruitfulneſs of her Education; that ſo her Children in the Fleſh, may be God's Children in the Spirit, 1 *Sam.* 1. 11. *Hannah* ſhe vows if the Lord will give her a Son, by bearing him, ſhe will return that Son to the Lord by ſerving him. A Spouſe ſhould be more careful of her Childrens Breeding, than ſhe ſhould be fearful of her Childrens Bearing. Take heed leſt theſe Flowers grow in the Devil's Garden. Though you bring them out in Corruption, yet do

do not bring them up to Damnation. Thoſe are not Mothers, but Monſters, that whil'ſt they ſhould be teaching their Children the way to Heaven with their Lips, are leading them the way to Hell with their lives.

Good Education is the beſt Livery you can give them living; and it's the beſt Legacy you can leave them dying. You let out your Cares to make them great, O lift up your Prayers to make them good: That before you die from them, you may ſee Chriſt live in them.

Whil'ſt theſe twigs are green and tender, they ſhould be bowed towards God. Children and Servants are in a Family, as Paſſengers are in a Boat; Husband and Wife they are as a pair of Oars, to row them to their deſired Haven. Let theſe ſmall pieces of Timber be hewed and ſquared for the Cœleſtial Build-

ing. By putting a Scepter of Grace into their Hands, you will set a Crown of Glory upon their Heads.

4. A Help to his Prosperity by her faithful Preservation, being not a Wanderer abroad, but a Worker at home.

One of the Ancients speaks excellently; She must not be a Field-Wife, like *Dinah*; nor a Street-Wife, like *Thamar*; nor a Window Wife, like *Jezabel*.

Phideas when he drew a Woman, painted her sitting under a Snail-shell, that she might imitate that little Creature, that goes no farther than it can carry its House upon its Head.

How many Women are there, that are not labouring Bees, but Idle Drones; that take up a room in the Hive, but bring no Honey to it; that are Moths to their Husbands Estates; spending when they should

ſhould be ſparing? As the Man's part is to provide induſtriouſly, ſo the Womans is to preſerve diſcreetly; the one muſt not be careleſly wanting; the other muſt not be cauſleſly waſting: the Man muſt be ſeeking with diligence, the Woman muſt be ſaving with providence. The Cock and Hen both ſcrape together in the Duſt-heap, to pick up ſomething for their little Chickens.

To wind up this on a ſhort bottom,

1. If the Woman be a help to the Man, then let not the Man caſt dirt on the Woman.

Secundus being asked his Opinion of a Woman, ſpeaks thus, *Viri naufragium, domus tempeſtas, quietis impedimentum*, &c. But ſurely he was a Monſter, and not a Man, fitter for a Tomb to bury him, than a Womb to bear him.

Some

Some have ſtyled them to be,

Like Clouds in the Sky.
Like Motes in the Sun.
Like Snuffs in the Candle.
Like Weeds in the Garden.

It is not good to play the Butcher with that naked Sex, that hath no arms but for embraces. A Preacher ſhould not be ſilent for thoſe, who are ſilenced from Preaching; becauſe they are the weaker veſſels, ſhall they be broken all to pieces? Thou that ſayeſt Women are evil, it may be thy Expreſſion flows from thy Experience; but I ſhall never take that Mariner for my Pilot, that hath no better knowledge, than the ſplitting of his own Ship. Wilt thou condemn the frame of all, for the fault of one? As if it were true Logick, becauſe ſome are evil, therefore none are good.

He

He hath ill Eyes that disdains all Objects. To blast thy Helper, is to blame thy Maker. In a word, we took our rise from their Bowels, and may take our rest in their Bosoms.

2. Is the Woman to be a Help to the man? Then let the Man be a help to the Woman. What makes these Debtors be such ill Pay-Masters? but because they look at what is owing to them, but not at what is owing by them? If thou would'st have thy Wife's reverence, let her have thy respect. To force a fear from this Relation, is that which neither befits the Husbands authority to enjoyn, nor the Wifes duty to perform. A Wife must not be sharply driven, but sweetly drawn. Compassion may bend her, but Compulsion will break her. Husband and Wife should act towards each other with consent, not by constraint.

There are four things wherein the Husband is a meet help to the Wife.

First, In his protecting of her from Injuries. It's well observed by one, that the Rib of which Woman was made, was taken from under the Man's arm: as the use of the arm is to keep off blows from the Body, so the Office of the Husband is to ward off blows from the Wife. The Wife is the Husbands Treasury, and the Husband should be the Wifes Armory. In Darkness he should be her Sun for Direction; in Danger he should be her Shield for Protection.

Secondly, In his providing for her Necessities. The Husband must communicate Maintenance to the Wife, as the Head conveys Influence to the Members; thou must not be a Drone, and she a Drudge.

A Man in a Married Estate, is like a Chamberlain in an Inne, there's knocking for him in every Room. Many Persons in this condition, waste that Estate in Luxury, which should supply their Wife's Necessity. *Nec amor viget mariti, nec fides Christiani*; They have neither the Faith of a Christian, nor the Love of a Husband. It's a sad spectacle to see a Virgin sold with her own money unto slavery, when Services are better than Marriages; The one receives Wages, whil'st the other buys their Fetters.

3. In his Covering of her Infirmities. Who would trample upon a Jewel because it is fallen in the dirt? Or throw away a heap of Wheat for a little Chaff? Or despise a Golden Wedge, because it retains some Dross? These Roses have some prickles. Now Husbands should spread a Mantle of Charity

over their Wives infirmities. They be ill Birds that defile their own Nests. It's a great deal better you should fast, than feast your selves upon their failings. Some Husbands are never well, longer than they are holding their fingers in their Wife's sores. Such are like Crows, that fasten onely upon Carrion. Do not put out the Candle, because of the Snuff. If the Gold be good, allow it *Grains*. Husbands and Wives should provoke one another to Love; and they should love one another notwithstanding of provocation. Take heed of poysoning those Springs from whence the streams of your pleasure flows.

4. By his delighting in her Society: A Wife takes Sanctuary, not only in her Husbands House, but in his Heart. The Tree of Love should grow up in the Family, as the Tree of Life grew up in the Garden.

den. They that chuſe their Love, ſhould love their Choice. They that Marry where they affect not, will affect where they Marry not. Two joyned together without Love, are but two tyed together to make one another miſerable. And ſo I paſs to the laſt Stage of the Text, *A Help meet.*

A Help, there's her Fulneſs; a *meet Help*, there's her fitneſs.

The Angels were too much above him; The Creatures were too much below him; he could not ſtep up to the former, nor could he ſtoop down to the later: The one was out of his reach, the other was out of his race: but the Woman is a parallel-line drawn equal with him: meet ſhe muſt be in three things.

1. In the Harmony of her Diſpoſition. Husband and Wife ſhould

be like the Image in a Looking-glass, that answers in all properties to the face that stands before it; or like an Eccho that returneth the voice it receiveth. Many Marriages are like putting New Wine into Old Bottles. An Old Man is not a meet Help for a Young Woman. He that sets a Gray Head upon Green Shoulders, hath one Foot in the Grave, and another in the Cradle. Yet how many times do you see the Spring of Youth, wedded to the Winter of Old Age? A Young Person is not a meet Help for an Old Woman; Raw Flesh is but an ill Plaister for Rotten Bones. He that in his Nonage marries another in her Dotage, his Lust hath one Wife in Possession, but his Love another in Reversion.

2. In the Herauldry of her Condition. Some of our European Nations are so strict in their Junctions, that

that it's againſt their Laws, for the Commonalty to Couple with the Gentry.

It was well ſaid by one: If the Wife be too much above her Husband, ſhe either ruins him by her vaſt expences, or reviles him with her baſe reproaches: If ſhe be too much below her Husband, either her former Condition makes her too generous, or her preſent mutation makes her too imperious.

Marriages are ſtyled Matches; yet amongſt thoſe many that are Married, how few are there that are matched? Husbands and Wives are like Locks and Keys, that rather break than open, except the Wards be anſwerable.

3. In the Holineſs of her Religion. If Adultery may ſeparate a Marriage contracted, Idolatry may hinder

hinder a Marriage not perfected. Cattel of divers kinds were not to ingender, 2 *Cor.* 6. 14. *Be not unequally yoaked*, &c. It's dangerous taking her for a Wife, who will not take God for a Husband. It is not meet that one Fleſh ſhould be of two Spirits. Is there never a Tree thou likeſt in the Garden, but that which bears forbidden fruit? There are but two Channels in which the remaining ſtreams ſhall run.

1. To thoſe Men that want Wives, how to chuſe them.

2. To thoſe Women that have Huſbands, how to uſe them.

Firſt, To thoſe Men that want Wives, how to chuſe them.

Marriage is the tying of ſuch a knot, that nothing but death can unloſe. Common Reaſon ſuggeſts ſo much, that we ſhould be long a doing,

doing, that which can but once be done. Where one design hath been gravelled in the Sands of Delay, Thousands have been split upon the Rock of Precipitance. Rash Adventures, yields little gain. Opportunities are not like Tides, that when one is past, another returns; but yet take heed of flying without your wings: you may breed such Agues in your Bones, that may shake you to your Graves.

1. Let me preserve you from a Bad Choice.

2. Present you with a good One.

1. To preserve you from a Bad Choice. Take that in Three Things:

1. Chuse not for Beauty.

2. Chuse not for Dowry.

3. Chuse not for Dignity.

He that looks for Beauty, buys a Picture.

He that loves for Dowry, makes a Purchase.

He that leaps for Dignity, matches with a Multitude at once.

The first of these is too blind to be directed.

The second, too base to be accepted.

The third, too bold to be respected.

1. Chuse not by your Eyes.

2. Chuse not by your Hands.

3. Chuse not by your Ears.

First, Chuse not by your Eyes, looking at the Beauty of the Person. Not but this is lovely in a Woman; but that this is not all for which

which a Woman ſhould be beloved. He that had the Choice of many Faces, ſtamps the Character upon them all; *Favour is deceitful, and Beauty is vain.* The Sun is more bright in a Clear Sky, than when the Horizon is clouded. But if a Womans fleſh hath more of Beauty, than her Spirit hath of Chriſtianity, it's like Poyſon in Sweet-meats, moſt dangerous, *Gen.* 6. 2. *The Sons of God ſaw the Daughters of Men, that they were fair*, &c. One would have thought, that they ſhould rather have looked for Grace in the Heart, than for Beauty in the Face. Take heed of Inning at the faireſt Signs: The Swan hath black Fleſh under her white Feathers.

Secondly, Chuſe not by your Hands, for the Bounty of the Portion.

When *Cato*'s Daughter was asked, Why ſhe did not Marry? She thus replied, She could not find the Man

that loved her Person above her Portion. Men love Curious Pictures, but they would have them set in Golden Frames. Some are so degenerate, as to think any good enough, who have but Goods enough. Take heed, for sometimes the Bag and Baggage go together. The Person should be a Figure, and the Portion a Cypher, which added to her, advances the Sum; but alone signifies nothing. When *Themistocles* was to marry his Daughter, two Suitors courted her together, the one Rich, and a Fool; the other Wise, but Poor; and being demanded, Which of the two he had rather his Daughter should have? He answered, *Mallem Virum sine Pecunia*, &c. I had rather she should have a Man without Money, than Money without a Man.

Thirdly, Chuse not by your Eares, for the Dignity of her Parentage.

A good Old Stock may nouriſh a fruitleſs branch. There are many Children who are not the bleſſings, but the blemiſhes of their Parents. They are nobly deſcended, but ignobly minded. Such was *Aurelius Antonius*, of whom it was ſaid, That he injured his Countrey in nothing, but being the Father of ſuch a Child. There are many low in their Deſcents, that are high in their Deſerts. Such as the Cobblers Son, who grew to be a famous Captain; when a great Perſon upbraided the Meanneſs of his Original, My Nobility (ſaith he) begins with me, but thy Nobility ends with thee. Piety is a greater Honour than Parentage. She is the beſt Gentlewoman that is Heir of her own Deſerts, and not the degenerated Off-ſpring of anothers Vertue.

To preſent you with a good Choice, in three things;

1. Chuſe ſuch a one as will be ſubject to your dominion. Take heed of yoaking your ſelves with Untamed Heifers.

2. Chuſe ſuch a One as may ſympathize with you in your affliction. Marriage is juſt like a Sea-Voyage; he that enters into this Ship, muſt look to meet with ſtorms and tempeſts, 1 *Cor.* 7. 28. *They that marry, ſhall have trouble in the fleſh.* Fleſh and trouble are married together, whether we marry or no; now a Bitter Cup is too much to be drunk by one Mouth. A heavy Burthen is eaſily carried by the aſſiſtance of other Shoulders. Husband and Wife ſhould neither be proud fleſh, nor dead fleſh. You are fellow-members, therefore ſhould have a fellow feeling. While one ſtands ſafe on the Shore, the other ſhould pity him that is toſt on the Sea. Sympathy in Suffering,

Suffering, is like a Dry Houſe in Wet Day.

3. Chuſe ſuch a One as may be ſerviceable to your Salvation. A Man may think he hath a Saint, when he hath a Devil: but take heed of a Harlot, that is falſe to thy Bed; and of a Hypocrite, that is falſe to thy God.

Secondly, To thoſe Women that have Husbands, how to uſe them. In two Things.

1. Carry your ſelves towards them with Obedience. Let their Power command you, that their Praiſe may commend you. Though you may have your Husbands Hearts, yet you muſt not have their Heads; as you will his Love, ſo y ouſhould love his Will. Till the Husband leaves Commanding, the Wife muſt never leave Obeying. As his Injunctions muſt be

be Lawful; so her [illegible] shall be Loyal.

2. With Faithfulness. In Creation, God made not one Woman for many Men, nor many Women for one Man: Every Wife should be to her Husband, as *Eva* was to *Adam*, a whole World of Women; and every Husband should be to his Wife, as *Adam* was to *Eva*, a whole World of Men. When a River is divided into many Channels, the main Current starves.

To conclude, Good Servants are a great Blessing; good Children, greater Blessing; but a good Wife is the greatest Blessing; and such a Help let him seek for her that wants one, let him sigh for her that hath lost one, let him take pleasure in her, that enjoys one. *And the Lord God said, It is not good*, &c.

F I N I S.